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# the calvert review

The University of Maryland



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# the calvert review

UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND

VOLUME II, No. 1

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# REQUIEM FOR BUDDY

/ Jim Gregory

AS he came out of the lodge he squinted up at the early morning sun and then over at the Highlands. The ribbons of white ski trails sliced through the dark green pines from timberline to the base in front of him. High above on the top of the mountain the vast expanse of open snow blinded gold as he looked at it.

He stepped off the sundeck and picked up his skis. He ran his hand down the bottoms of the skis to check the wax and edges. His fingers noted a nick in the tail of one of the edges where he had hit a rock. Slapping the skis together he quickly checked the camber and then dropped the skis on the snow. He stepped onto one, bent down and flipped the leather thongs around his boot. Every time he fastened his thongs he smiled at his old instructor's comment.

"There's no margin for error when you use thongs. The boards are now a part of your foot. If you fall, your foot and leg go with the ski." So far he'd never really found out if it were true. He pulled the strap tight and then stepped onto the other ski and repeated the procedure.

There was no one who had arisen to watch him as he arose lightly, grabbed his poles and pulled on his gloves. He pushed off for the tow.

He stepped in behind the ski patrolmen that were going up to open the slopes. Only a curt nod was exchanged in greeting. Once he got to the top he would have about two hours before the crowds arrived. As he positioned himself for the chair, the lift attendant said, "Stay away from the Cornice. The patrolmen think it might break today."

He had noticed the day before that the lip of the Cornice was growing and the patrol would soon have to break it off if it didn't come down by itself. The Cornice, a wind-blown lip of snow on the lee side of the crest, hung over the shortest and most difficult trail down the mountain. If and when it broke, several hundred tons of white death would come cascading down into the valley having no respect for anything in its path. However, he noted the warning somewhat absent-mindedly as he was planning on spending the early hours on the open slopes above the upper tow. He wouldn't cross below the Cornice before eleven or twelve o'clock.

The chair slammed against his legs and shoved him into the back of the seat.

He settled back as it swung out from the lift house and began its climb up the mountain. He looked around the valley as the mountain dropped away and glanced back down toward the lodges. A few people were starting to come out to go for breakfast or to pick up their equipment. As the chair climbed higher up the mountain the people looked more and more like insects scurrying around. A light gust of wind gently rocked the chair and he felt a wave of revulsion hit him. He quickly turned back and looked up the mountain. He felt a sharp relief in the empty slopes above him.

He pushed off the first tow and skated across the flat to the second tow. He caught the chair and began the longest of the three climbs. His face felt the chill of the last night breeze as his back slowly warmed with the rising sun. The last scrawny timberline tree passed below him. The second tow ended in the shadow of Miner's Mountain.

He set his poles and pushed toward the last tow a quarter mile away. The new powder snow lay about three inches deep so he settled back on his skis and let the tips rise onto the surface of the feather quilt. The gentle slope allowed a lazy run to the last tow.

He was alone on the last climb. The wind whistling through the tow cables seemed to lower the temperature another ten degrees. A small cloud crashed into the sun as he dropped off the last tow and the wind whipped the powder into his face. He tugged the parka closer around his neck and adjusted his goggles. The lenses turned the world a science-fiction green. He quickly side-stepped to the crest and paused to look down the other side. He saw the eagle slowly circle on the wind to rise up out of the dark valley. The north slopes were still hidden in the darkness of the pre-dawn. The little night clouds scurried through the valley like rats to escape the murderous rays of sunlight creeping down the far slope. He involuntarily turned away from the forbidding black to the vast expanse of yellow-white nothingness that dropped back finally into Aspen somewhere out of sight below. It was nearly a four thousand foot drop back to the lodge. He could travel the whole distance in less than fifteen minutes.

He rammed his poles into the powder and leaped into the first run. High above him the eagle, circling in search of prey eyed the silent swift figure flying over the new snow. Neither had time to notice the similarity.

His mind was not on his warming-up exercises as he mechanically cut back and forth through the trackless powder. A christie, a stem, split rotation; his body demonstrated a flawless form. Not a sound broke through his reflections of yesterday's events.

He had hurt Penny in his usual manner—she was a little too sensitive but he had no right to criticize her efforts nor her failure to place in the downhill. Obviously she had tried. So had Billy. Billy had said himself that he had made some sloppy gates on the slalom. That was no reason to criticize him. The coach had asked if he wanted to take over the training program. Perhaps it was just self criticism due to his fall through the open gate on the giant slalom. He had gone

the gate too many times before without even concentrating. Had it been more than just a simple fall?

He was five years older than anybody else on the team. He had been skiing for eight years longer and yet he had failed to win nearly as many medals as people had expected he would. The general comment was that he was one of those "hard luck characters." No one could criticize his form or his efforts. No one worked harder or had any more spirit. But twenty-six is a little old for anybody on competition slopes. No matter how good you are technically, you begin to lose that split second control that is so vital in the slalom and the downhill. He knew his fans watched every move but so did the critics and the coach.

He stiffened automatically and his outside edge caught the hard base that had blown clean. He was thrown off balance for a moment but caught himself and eased back on his skis as he crossed back into the deep powder. A cold laugh broke the silence as he expertly saved himself from what would normally have been a fall. Surely there was nothing in his appearance to make one think that he had lost any of his skill and control.

He unthinkingly executed a christiana leger that cleared his mind in a giant spray of snow. His job was to practice the coach's new dyna-turn. He shot across the steep slope and approached the turning point.

"Now—lean away from the hill—keep your knees into the hill—pressure on the inside edge—shift to the uphill ski—shoulders to the outside—the turn must carve—plant the pole—turn—again—lean away from the hill—repeat the moves."

Each turn took less than a second. He realized that he had a lot of practicing to do before he could do the turn automatically. Another turn—another—again—again—back and forth—back and forth. The eagle watched the figure make the sharp traverses down the slope until it pulled up in front of the chair lift for the climb back to the top.

Somewhere down below the rest of the team was eating breakfast or doing calisthenics. They would be laughing at each other's push-ups or criticizing their eating habits. There would be the usual argument over the types of wax to use and a hundredth analysis of yesterday's runs. The coach would come in and prod them to get-the-Hell up on the slopes. They would grab their poles and skis and head for the tows. By the time they got to the top he would have made his fourth run.

The sweat chilled refreshingly as he went into his fifth series of turns. He smiled at his improvement. It would soon be time to take the long practice run down to the bottom.

He stepped off the upper tow and once again pushed toward the back edge of the hill. The hill was almost a vertical drop into the valley. There were two trails that cut through the trees to the bottom. One had killed more skiers than any other in the world. He had skied it several times when he felt the need. Maybe today was another time.

A shout shattered his daydream. He turned to see who it was. A couple of

the team had arrived on top and were pushing toward him. He acknowledged their greeting by spinning and pushing off down the slope in a flurry of powder.

He took the first mogul straight, planting his poles on the top and leaping off the crest. He flew about twelve feet. He came down with a sharp christie that put him into an open traverse across the slope. The sun was bearing down now so he pulled his parka open and went into the sharp turn at the head of the upper tow. There were several people crossing the open field between the tows and he shot through them without a glance. Some of the people watched him as he went over the crest with the powder whirling in his wake. He crossed above the second tow and saw the orange octagon that closed the trail that led onto the Cornice. The patrol was probably bringing up the gun to shoot the snow lip down and create the avalanche so they could control it. He didn't slow down as he passed the patrolman and went into the first turn on the Mary Jane. The patrolman watched him disappear into the trees and then planted the orange octagon to close Mary Jane trail.

At first the trail was wide and steep. The trees had been cleared away to make a twenty to thirty yard wide strip down the mountain. However, this was deceiving as the next turn brought him into a very narrow trail. In some places the trees threatened to squeeze the trail out completely. He pulled his skis together and bent down to miss the low branches. He had no real control over his skis at this point. All he could do was hope that there would be nothing in the trail to throw him. His speed rapidly built up to above fifty miles an hour and the trees, no more than a foot away on either side spun by in a greenish-brown blur. The wind whipped up under his goggles and brought the first tears to his eyes. An occasional branch grabbed at his poles or arm and almost yanked him off the trail. The wind, trees, snow and trail fought to overpower this conqueror. They had laid a very clever ambush. Several times when the edge of his ski grabbed the base or slid over an exposed branch it seemed as though they had won. Fate carried him out onto a gentle open strip where he could stand up and stretch his tight muscles as he coasted. He had only covered about a third of the trail and already the brassy taste he got in hard skiing was strong in his mouth.

As he entered the second stretch of narrow trail he heard the first shot from the anti-tank gun rip through the air and tear into the Cornice.

The trail was not so narrow but was steeper and more windy. He cut back and forth like the giant slalom. His silent run was punctuated by the second and third shots.

His speed slowed a little on a turn and he dug his poles in deep and pushed to reach the maximum safe speed. He pushed again and again.

The eagle dived low but could not follow the flying figure. The trees were taller and closer together and the trail was almost pitch black. He thumbed his goggles up on his forehead to see. Again the branches and trees attacked. He fought them off successfully as he had fought off all previous attacks against him. His defense was a secure one that caused him no worry.

He broke out into a small meadow halfway down the side of the mountain.



The sun blinded him and he clawed his goggles back into place. He again straightened up and looked around. Above him was the Cornice and as he looked up he felt the brass hard and cold in his mouth. The Cornice had broken and was falling on him. Hundreds of tons of snow and ice were ripping into the trees directly above. He dug the trail with his poles and dropped forward to make the last short trail before he hit the open area below. He had to get through the trees to reach safety. As he entered the last trail area he had no thought for the futile clinging branches. At times he passed the sixty mile an hour mark and kept pushing harder. There was no time for thought and fear had conquered rationality. It was the same enemy he had seen that morning on the north slope and the one that had caught him yesterday on the giant slalom. He recognized that this was his foe's strongest attack.

Only a hundred more yards to beat him. The thunderous rumble and the death cries of trees being ripped from the ground drowned out any thought. He caught a quick glance over his shoulder and saw the wall of rocks, trees and snow towering above him no more than thirty yards behind.

He hit the open area and poled rapidly several times to increase his already tremendous speed. He saw the slalom poles in front of him. The starter's gun had given him a good start and he made the open run in record time.

"Now—lean away from the hill—keep your knees into the hill—pressure on the inside edge—shift to the uphill ski—shoulders to the outside—the turn must carve—He and the slalom pole tree disappeared beneath the onrushing wall.

High above the eagle lazily circled the wall of debris as it moved on into the valley.

## THE LAST FROST

THE pregnant grass stalks  
crack from their frozen innards;  
the scarecrow flinches.

—Reus

"It's all right," the fisherman said,  
As he put his tackle into his car.  
"I saw Mr. Evans up the creek;  
He was just having a little trouble with his motor.  
But it's all right. He should be in soon."  
(Even though the sky is hovering closer  
And plunging the earth into black)  
He will be home soon.

"He died in peace," Aunt Eva said.  
"It was nice that he died  
After spending a day on the river,  
Going for bait . . . doing what he liked to do.  
You have a lot to be thankful for."  
(Even though a white cloud  
Has closed its fingers into a claw)  
He died in peace.

And, like the other children, I didn't care  
Because he was old and crabby,  
Seldom stirring much except to holler at us.  
But his wife cried this year  
After the new pier they had planned was finally built.  
And the sky was so black last night  
That I couldn't see where to walk  
Until she turned on the outside light.  
But I was still a child in a playsuit  
When I caught the crab that swam along the surface;  
Yet in the house it was quiet,  
And she listened in the dark until she fell asleep.

—*Kay Grimes*

# TWO SKETCHES

/ Roy V. Eales

## I. LEGION

THERE'S an air of expectation at the Legion tonight. At least, from one side of the bar. The side where the interlopers sit. It's the true British Legionnaires, the old white-haired, waist-coated ex-troopers who sit with pints of brown ale in front of them watching what they call telly. Yes, it's true British Legionnaires who call the younger element sitting across from them, "the interlopers." You see it's Thursday and that's the day the football team have their meeting at the Legion. The military bods don't like Thursday night because their territory is infringed upon. After all, why shouldn't they; it's their club. The British Legion is for Army bods not teddy-boys. It's here that old war memories are thrown around; the Kaiser, Hitler, Mussolini, gas masks, mustard gas and trenches. The old fellows have just got used to television; now they've got a bunch of kids who haven't hardly had their 'arses' dried yet. "Gawd 'elp us Fred," says a red face who must have been a sergeant-major, "if we ever get in anuther war wiv this lot around, dunno what'll 'appen to us." The red face is heard across the bar. Nods of agreement follow, but the eyes never leave the television. So the men are separated from the boys at the Legion.

At the football side of the bar there is quiet, then bursts of laughter, quiet, then bursts of laughter. It means that jokes are being told. After each burst, there's a shout from the television side—"Belt up over there we can't hear the telly"—the reply is "balls." The jokes continue in between rounds of brown and light. At this point a middle-aged Irishman walks into the bar. The Irishman says hello to the old and the young then gets a pint and joins the young. This is the manager of the football team. He, an expert in bricks and the laying of them, is here for the weekly meeting which is really a cover-up for a drink-up. "Hallo lads," he shouts, "all fit? No one hurted I hope?" The faces look up from the jokes and beer and the manager is welcomed. "Watcha Maurice." So he sits and there's more beer and more talk of who's to win one thing or another, or of one girl or another, or of



one film or another. The glances and shouts still come from the other side; "bloody nerve they've got coming here." The military mettle hardens. The colours are fading; it's the telly you know. You wonder what's going on. You do. Here are people, but age is the bridge. On different wavelengths. Funny, you'd think the young mob would be watching the telly. Anyway, they're not, no they're getting ready to go into the back room for the football meeting. It's no use describing them, you have to use your head. They are a bunch of bricklayers, electricians, layabouts, students, an antique reviver's apprentice, road diggers, and that's it. Sounds like a meeting of the Trade Union Congress with old Cousins—but it's just a football meeting with a beer or two thrown in. You wouldn't find Home or Macmillan here, but then you wouldn't find an antique reviver's apprentice at 10 Downing Street, would you? (At least, before the advent of Harold.) So in they go, twenty or so, in the back room. Now the order sets in. Maurice, the Irish bricky, sits at the head with his committee: a photographer, a rubbish collector and one fat fellow who works in a factory putting the shiny side on film.

The meeting is really about to commence. Maurice asks if everyone has beer. If not they are to get it now so as not to mess up the meeting with lots of flying around. There is a little opening in the wall to which the barmaid comes for orders from the bar. After all have filled their jugs, the meeting begins. Maurice officially opens it by banging a Guinness bottle three times on the table top in front of him on which are his notes. "Order now gents, the meeting's begun." Maurice tells the boys how well they played last week and hopes they do the same this time. A nudge from a committee member at his side brings Maurice to another point. "A ball was pinched last week, whoever knows anything about it, is to hand it in," he says indiscreetly. Then there is a discussion, which becomes heated, as to who should wash out the football shirts after they have been used. Some say the club, others the individual. A vote is taken. It is the club's job. The rubbish collector writes it into his minutes. The "other business" is run through. The floor is asked for questions. A hand, a voice: "Er yearh, what d'ya fink abaat the club 'aving noo shurts, yer know like the conteynent'lls, eh? What d'ya fink about that then eh?" Maurice empties his glass. The committee begins to speak, in fact everyone begins to speak. Maurice bangs the Guinness bottle on the table three times for order. There's a shout from the back of the room—"Come on then let's get this meeting over, the bar will be closed soon." The committee has discussed the question from the floor on the proposition of new shirts from the continent. Maurice speaks: "First lad we ain't got the money and second we aren't having nothing to do with the continent—bloody foreigners, wogs." Maurice gets heated, he is pulled back from throwing out his arm, on the end of which is the Guinness bottle, in the direction of the continental favourer. The committee table comes to rest. There are no more questions. The team selection committee is left to choose this week's team. Now the remainder wanders back into the bar to the disgusted sneers of the world-war-oners. Two great hulks of flesh grapple and snarl in a wrestling match on the telly. Three thin-faced men, one in overalls, play darts in the corner; one throws, the other

chalks and the third marches up and down. Upstairs, a bald-headed man with pimples and spots on his head plays a piano which needs tuning. Outside it's dark, a scruffy lamp lights up the words British Legion. The bald-headed man with spots and pimples on his head goes downstairs to cadge a pint now that the boys are back. "The man's a right cadger," says one electrician to another.

The brown and mild flows till closing time. As more has been consumed more of the oldens are seen to be mixing with the youngsters. Maurice sings now of Killarney's lakes so blue. A group sings in the corner of maybe it's because they're Londoners. Nineteen-fourteen blends into nineteen-sixty-five. They're all in the same battle now the television has been given the boot. Someone tells the barman to bring the piano down from above so that the bald-headed geezer can play. So here the nation's greatest tea drinkers are one. At last through the efforts of the hops in Kent, friends together. Well not knowing what to make of it one can see something has been achieved. The antique reviver's apprentice is happy with the team selection committee—chosen again at centre half. "Good lad that, good lad that, knows what to do with the ball, put him in Fred." When it's all over they all reckon they've had a bloody good time, then each goes home to his mother or wife. For Britain has an export problem to be solved in the morning.

## II. ANOTHER MARTYR FOR OLD IRELAND

BAYSWATER, though in London, is nowhere near Bow-bells, thus its people aren't cockneys. In fact, if a count were taken it would probably turn out there are more O'Caseys and Flannigans than anything else. Like Maurice Broon, the bricky manager of the British Legion Football Club, and regular of the Walmer Castle, who last saw Limerick in late 1939, others have come from that land of outcry to teach the English some manners. When the English start teaching the English some manners, then it might be possible for Joyce's mob to offer a verb or two in that direction, but as it stands now, with the mother's squabbling kids bothering each other with accents, addresses and positions, the Dubliners might as well save their tongues for a good pint.

Across Canwell Street where stands Maurice's house, which like the rest in that street has been there for a hundred years or more, and unlike the rest has a new red brick wall, sits Matt Doony in the front room. The Doonys, any nosey neighbour will say, are Irish and have no right to the council flat in which they sit. "What about the poor English people who've bin on the waiting liss fer ages and ages," the nosey neighbour will add, concluding with, "after awl they're all foreigners ain't they then." But the Doonys never hear this, they sense it. Mr. Doony sits at the table in front of his dinner. He hasn't long arrived home from the hospital in Hammersmith where he spends his day as chief doorman. It's not clear whether the dinner in front of his chief doorman's uniform, the coat of which is open

showing a pair of striped braces on each shoulder, is steaming from oven heat or from Matt Doony's breath. For Matt, being well-in with someone in the hospital, has had his usual swig of the meths that afternoon.

But Matt tucks into his pork chop. His head sways over the table as he eats; an alcoholic stained belch straightens him sharply, a similar rumble climbs up from his stomach. His chin he buries into his chest. The rumble travels down to his black hobnail boots and the linoleum covered floor, passing his silver hospital buttons on its way. "Doony you're a pig of a man be Jazus, can you not come home sober for once, as if it's not enough to be drinking as soon as the pubs are open at night, you're at it in the afternoon as well. Mary and all the Angels you're a pig of a man." Matt's wife Maggie goes off into the kitchen. Matt pays more attention to the pork chop than he does to his wife from Cork. He's heard it all before, and comments only with an occasional belch. Maggie still carries on from the kitchen where she slices a loaf of bread. She is a round woman and has bleached her hair to go with the gleam in her eye that she has for Maurice's apprentice brickys when the Walmer Castle turns out its patrons at closing time. "I'd like to know where you get the money, aye, that I would Matt Doony," she shouts from the kitchen waving the bread knife, "that I would, be the death of you, mark my words, by the Lord it'll be the death of you. Mark my words, with the hands that the Lord gave me. Sitting on your backside drunk as old McGinty, where I'd like to know do you get the money."

Matt has removed himself from the table and has stretched out on the sofa. His mouth is half open. He breathes heavily through his teeth. "I suppose you've been telling them people that you tell about your stomach again. One of these days you *will* have your stomach shot out by the Germans. Sure as the Lord you'll not cope with the drinking then Matt Doony . . ." Maggie's shouts from the kitchen are stopped by the ringing of the door-bell. A little ten year-old girl with blue eyes and grubby hands runs into the kitchen. "Mam, do you think I could be having a penny, just a penny, that's all, Mam, then I'll be off to play in the street with Moira," the girl shouts. "If you keep blasting me ears with your noise I'll give you me hand, that's what I'll give you. What would you be wanting a penny for?" Maggie asks. The girl picks a lump from the bread. Her mother sharply brings a hand down on the girl's hand. "Now what did you do that for my girl, your hands are covered in muck, the bread will be full of germs, get to the sink and scrub them, go on with you bringing the muck from the road to the house."

Helen, the daughter, is the youngest child. Matt and Maggie have produced two other girls and a boy. She washes her hands and seeing her father laid out on the sofa runs into the front room. "Dad," she gets no response. She looks around in her mother's direction and lowers her voice as she grabs the sleeping man's braces. "Dad, could you let me have a penny?" She tugs, pulling the braces to the old man's snoring face. He mumbles. "Dad." He opens his eyes slowly. "Arrr, what is it then, what's the matter now? Would you let me know just what you mean by shoving and pushing an old man who's been at work . . . arrrr it's you me

lass, what would you be wanting then?"

"Dad, if you could just give me a penny I'll be off again and not be bothering you . . ."

"Helen," Maggie shouts from the kitchen, "what are you doing? Come here at once now you'll be waking your father. He's been at work all day and sure as Heaven, he's not to be wanting to be bothered." Matt takes a shilling from his pocket, and gives it to Helen who runs out almost knocking Maggie over as she enters the front room.

"Look where you're going would you," says Maggie as Helen runs out into the street. "Well you're awake I see then are you, all you do is drink and sleep, you're a pig of a man Matt Doony, aye, that you are, well if you want to take me to the Walmer tonight you'd better be getting yourself up and washed," says Maggie clearing the dishes from the table. "And don't be going off with that Hockey like you did the other night, he'll lead you on with his talk of horses."

Matt slowly rises at the same time he scratches his head. "Margaret, I don't think I'll be taking you to the Walmer tonight, it's me stomach that's the trouble again. why don't you go with Hockey's wife. Aye, she's to be going tonight is she? Aye, I think she'll be there. . . ." Maggie puts down the dishes with a bang. "If you think you'll be having your fun and drinking at work and leaving me here all day, and then coming here and telling me you'll not be taking me for a drink. . . ." Maggie shakes her stubby forefinger at Matt. Matt looks at the floor; his head rests on his palms. "I'll be getting ready then Maggie, I'll be getting ready. Arrr me head is turning inside like the spin of a top."

## SALVATION — PART II

"REPENT, Jesus is coming"  
says the sign on the side  
of the new Chevrolet,  
parked amid orange peels  
slippery  
as snowballs  
and a man sweeping bottlecaps  
under his toes.

And Chagall's high,  
tied-up on a telephone pole  
painting purple footballs  
hung from Xmas trees.

"Repent, Jesus is coming"  
says the sign on the side  
of the new Chevrolet,  
crouched on its knees  
wheel-less and  
just for fun  
with mud  
on the headlights.

—Richard Stanley



# BIRDS OF A FEATHER

/ L. T. Grant

HARRY sat in the window-seat, a terry-cloth robe draped over his round shoulders, smoking in the darkness. Although it was the peculiar darkness just before dawn in spring, a lavender darkness, as though beneath a black skirt were a silk slip of that color, still, the cigarette was tasteless. Harry pecked it out in the ashtray. He then reached over and picked up the large pair of binoculars he had bought from the Book-Of-The-Month-Club, bought without actually intending to put them to use.

"Indeed," thought Harry, "I have no need of them any longer; I can cancel my membership in the club as well."

Harry had someone now. True, she was ten years younger than he, but it hardly mattered, though it was food for thought.

"It is, in fact, inconsequential," thought Harry as he fondled the bulky binoculars, "she is right there in bed."

The room smelled of a woman sleeping, of the woman Harry called his "wife."

Things had taken a turn for the better lately, just when they were at their worst. At last there were travelled roads for Harry, places to go, rooms of light and laughter to receive him, and more important, a woman with warm arms to help and sustain him.

Many things had changed. For instance, the Golden Gate was a bridge of life for Harry now, whereas in the past it might just as well have been the spine of a dinosaur spanning the Pacific, as dull and impersonal as the eighth wonder of the world. But since Harry had to ride the transit bus from his flat in San Francisco to Marin county, he necessarily crossed the bridge twice a day, just after polished dawn, when the sun and sea signalled to one another and the light reverberated through the bridge, and just before tarnished dusk, when the dull sun and somber water communed with shadows; and his position at Smith and Davis Inc. was a new beginning reached by way of the golden bridge.

Because, in a sense, this gateway to Marin gave him life, or perhaps simply because he had a musician's ear which always divined the music of life, the

Golden Gate was far more than just a bridge to Harry Fellows now, it was a musical instrument of exquisite design—its bright slender towers touched the sun, and between them were strung fine glinting cables, like harp strings. It was, in short, the most enormous and yet most sensitive harp ever built, which no hands could play, but only the ocean wind, making music only he, Harry Fellows, could hear. It seemed to Harry, when he made the daily trip, that the murmur of the cables above the flowing sea was pitched too high for the ears of his companions on the Number 5, and that, so to speak, he heard it "with the ear of his soul."

Although Harry had been keeping books at Smith and Davis ad agency for three days, he had not noticed any corruption of his faculties, any coarsening or brutalizing of his soul, a fate he called "the wages of respectability." On the contrary, he was more alive than ever before. Love, he told himself, as he snipped artfully at one or two errant whiskers—determined oddfellows—in his handsome goatee and whistled softly before the mirror, kept his soul free and musical. With his body he bought his soul out of bondage to poverty and bachelorhood and unhappiness, the "three cardinal sins" which had "muddied the clear water of his life," as he put it. And so, he prepared for work with a certain joy, a gusto not to be found in most bookkeepers on Wednesday, or on any other day, for that matter. The tune Harry whistled was part of the "Golden Gate Sonata" he planned to write for his wife Kathi, whom he could see reflected in the bathroom mirror, sleeping, her dark and dishevelled hair spread across his pillow. Harry was sure the moment would arrive soon, he could feel the inspiration gathering itself within him, little by little, reaching the point at which it must explode, speak through him as through a medium, and fill the horizontal lines of his fading music paper with notes.

At the moment, however, his desire was for Kathi, whom, as he felt everyone must know, he loved to distraction and treated "like a queen." Everything he had was for her, the apartment, the starched-shirt job, even the "marriage," to which she feigned indifference; and now he would dedicate to his wife a beautiful sonata, the realization of a dream which had lifted him above the slough of New York thirteen years ago and driven him to San Francisco, the city of arching dreams and golden bridges.

"Let your wife sleep," thought Harry, "a young girl needs her rest." Harry was thirty, as he had lately begun to realize, and he felt somewhat paternally toward his young wife. He stood beside her in the dim light, a little gray in his beard, and bending over, kissed her naked thigh lightly before covering her with the blanket.

The new refrigerator which contained Harry's breakfast gleamed and hummed against the kitchen wall, as loud as it was bright, as though it had an independent existence of its own. It was all steel and white enamel, and the polished metal handle reflected the formica and aluminum kitchen as though it were a mirror. Behind the huge steel door, which, for all its enormity, could be opened by the little finger of a child, was a capacious, one might almost say, cavernous metal belly capable of holding fifty dollars worth of groceries easily, or without much strain, Harry himself. Harry approached his latest purchase with a diffidence akin to awe,

for it was with awe that Harry, long a member of the San Francisco art-clan and a bachelor, regarded the gleaming and humming and hungry machine.

Behind the solid humming of the refrigerator, however, in which was something rather grim and terrible, like the chewing and clawing of iron gears, Harry seemed to hear the divine sighing of the Golden Gate as the salty breeze caressed its cables, like strong deft angels. This was an important day for Harry Fellows. It was Wednesday; Mr. Smith was due at the office for his monthly visit. There was something grim and terrible in that too. For Mr. Smith had not yet met Harry, who was hired by the office manager, John Stole, in his absence. Harry hoped to impress Mr. Smith with his earnestness, and also, with his superiority to the negligible position of bookkeeper. He expected rapid advancement. Though he despised the petty world of business, his new life depended upon success: the metal box gleaming in his kitchen had cost two hundred and fifty dollars, and the bed in which he and Kathi slept side by side had cost a hundred more.

And yet, bookkeeping was Harry Fellows' "avocation," or so he told his friends among the San Francisco art-clan.

"Even a musician has to eat," he said, laughing magnanimously. "I don't think it will really hurt my soul, do you?"

"Of course not Harry," his friends said as they sipped at his Canadian Club and munched imported cheddar cheese, "everyone has to eat."

Or were they his friends? Sometimes Harry wondered if there were not a sinister undercurrent in their answers. It seemed, at times, that his guests spoke to him from out the side of their mouths; and often they seemed to be watching the lamp-shade or the stereo rather than his face when they talked, which wasn't very flattering either. Of course, one had to realize that most of Harry's guests were a new generation of artists, Kathi's friends, and did not know Harry very well. However, this was not for Harry a satisfactory rationalization. In fact, it seemed to him that these new people didn't in the least appreciate his hospitality. They listened, but not attentively, to his reminiscences of Kerouac and Ginsberg, and seemed only the least bit interested in his autographed copy of "Howl." Harry had begun to ask himself if perhaps the clan life weren't becoming too competitive for an "older" man. It occurred to him that San Francisco had been just a stopping off place for the intelligentsia of ten years ago, but that somehow he hadn't moved on. Now, to his dismay, he had to cope with a new crowd, and although they looked the same as Harry had ten years before, carried the same tattered bag, containing a book or two, *The Analects of Confucius* or a few Baldwin novels, wore the same long stringy hair and shabby clothing, they were not the same at all, really. They seemed insensitive, and selfish; they seemed to hate the world less than themselves. They didn't know what gratitude or respect were. Harry thought of Kathi's young friend, "Jimmy the Soul," as he called him. When Harry was talking he'd stuck his thin face up to Harry's and said:

"But a man, Mr. Fellows, is not an instrument."

Harry, startled by his hard lips and fiery eyes, had turned to his wife.



"Harry knows that," Kathi had answered, sympathetic to his distress.

As Harry finished breakfast and scribbled a little love-note for Kathi, he whistled the "Golden Gate Sonata," his answer to them all. Soon they would know that Harry Fellows was far more than a bookkeeper, and that he labored over vertical ledgers merely to keep body and soul together.

## 11

Though cramped and uncomfortable on the transit bus that morning, Harry listened intently at the zenith of the Golden Gate, trying to catch the ineffable music of the vibrating cables as the ocean wind quivered through them.

Harry was fifteen minutes early as usual. He would have been earlier, but considered fifteen minutes a sufficient indication of initiative without being ostentatious. He greeted Miss Snider, the grey formidable spinster who directed the typists and took ads, affably but with reserve. She nodded reluctantly at his greeting, squinting through her bifocals. As Harry settled into the swivel chair before his desk he noted with satisfaction the order of its arrangement, adjusted the box of paper-clips, sorted the special ball-points for making entries in the ledger, and drew from his pocket a small bag of hard candies, individually wrapped in bright red and green paper. These he placed in the plastic dish at the upper right-hand corner of his desk, as a treat for the office staff. He then drew out the heavy green ledger from its special drawer and placed beside it the bank deposit slip. As he passed across the room toward the pencil-sharpener, Harry stopped at the desk of Miss Hyneman, a striking blond whose frank eyes appealed to him, and who had just scurried in at one minute to nine, as usual.

"Candy, Miss Hyneman?" asked Harry.

"No thank you, Harry. Too early yet," she said, smiling.

"You certainly are dressed fit to kill today," Harry said.

"You seem to have had Mr. Smith in mind also," she said, noticing perhaps Harry's french cuffs flirting from beneath his jacket at the wrists, or his gold tie-tac.

"One should make a good impression," said Harry, winking.

Harry was slightly agitated, awaiting the arrival of Mr. Smith, whose visits, though infrequent, he had been told, were a very serious matter. Work was to run smoothly, but at one and a half times its normal pace. Also, the ten o'clock coffee break would be provisionally suspended for the day, a point Miss Snider had made with undue satisfaction, speaking for Mr. Stole.

At nine o'clock on the dot Miss Snider brought Harry the day's checks, which it was her duty to remove from their envelopes. She put them into his hands abruptly and spoke a few clipped words. Harry felt that she would have liked to simply drop them on his desk, but feared this would be construed as impolite. Harry had the feeling as he looked into her bifocals that he faced a woman capable of murder but not of impropriety. Miss Snider was a clean and efficient woman of fifty. Harry, who was accustomed to the long-haired and careless women of

bohemian found her efficiency disconcerting and her cleanliness slightly repulsive. She was, thought Harry, as well-kept as a machine. In fact, Harry imagined that behind her dry powdered forehead was an immaculate stainless steel kitchen. He could see the shining utensils hanging from the white wall of her skull, from gleaming copper hooks. All the white enamel cabinets would contain polished metal cans, yes, and ideas would come to her as smoothly as the lighting of the bulb inside a refrigerator when the shiny enamel door is opened by the aluminum handle. She frightened him, but he could not but respect such a paragon of order.

Mr. Stole, on the other hand, for whom Miss Snider had little respect, was a friendly, excessively personable man not much older than Harry. He had hired Harry not on the basis of his past record, for he declared that he had none, nor on the basis of his education, though it was sufficient, but because, for some odd reason, he found acquaintance with Harry flattering. He had probably, conjectured Harry, before becoming eminently respectable, dreamed of being an artist. At any rate, he said he thought Harry's goatee very becoming and went so far as to oppose Miss Snider, which he seldom did, in welcoming Harry to the firm.

Actually, Wednesday was a slow day at Smith and Davis, as the rush by advertisers to make Sunday's classified section did not ordinarily begin until Thursday afternoon. As a result, Harry soon finished his daily ledger entries and was reduced to checking out previous sums on his adding machine. His fingers hit the small colored buttons rhythmically, and with his palm he hit the long sum-bar regularly, but his mind was not on the figures, nor even the room filled with artificial light. Instead, he thought of Kathi, his wife.

"What is she doing now," asked Harry, "just rising from her sweet bed like Aphrodite from the foam? Combing out her dark heavy hair in the yellow sunlight? Then what? Ah, yes, in a few weeks time she will go to the record player, her long hair covering her naked breasts, and place a recording on while she dresses, a recording of the "Golden Gate Sonata," composed for her by her husband, Harry Fellows."

Harry whistled to himself and smiled.

At that moment Harry saw Mr. Stole enter the office at the elbow of an imposing severe man of about forty-five, Mr. Smith no doubt. Mr. Smith talked slowly in abrupt monosyllables to which Mr. Stole made animated replies, using his fleshy hands. The other man loomed above him, seeming to ignore his answers, and brushed a speck of dust from the expensive blue herringbone jacket which covered his resounding chest and rocky shoulders. He turned his blue eyes on Mr. Stole who smiled ingratiatingly. Meanwhile, Miss Snider had stood up and walked to the front of her desk. She stood there, wearing a neat roomy dress, with her hands folded at her lap. As Mr. Smith approached, eyeing severely the line of typists, he stopped in front of Miss Snider.

"We are happy to see you again, sir," she said.

"Thank you, Miss Snider," Mr. Smith said.

Then Miss Snider turned her glance, leading the eyes of Mr. Smith, to Harry's

desk. Mr. Smith's eyes suddenly grew hard and he filled the caverns of his massive chest with air. Harry smiled and started to rise when Mr. Smith turned his back on him and faced Mr. Stole. Harry trembled. The fluorescent lights seemed to flicker, like the sinister smile of Miss Snider.

"Mr. Stole," he said, "who is that man?"

"That is our new bookkeeper," Mr. Stole said in a whisper.

"Mr. Stole," said Mr. Smith, his brows arched like marble, "why is he wearing a beard?"

"I don't know, sir," whined Mr. Stole.

"Have him shave it off by tomorrow. We do not hire beatniks here, Mr. Stole. Smith and Davis Inc. is not a coffee house. This is not a refuge for ne'er-do-wells."

Harry stood up on weak shaking legs, perspiring. Suddenly the right phrase came to mind, the saving words. Gripping his typewriter, he blurted out, "Mr. Smith, a man is not an instrument."

Silence followed.

"I have no intention of working for a bigot, or of being his tool."

With that Harry Fellows grabbed his new attaché case and with his last ounce of strength fled the room and Smith and Davis forever.

### III

As Harry crossed the Golden Gate on the Number 5, high above the blue flowing water of the strait, its metal aglow like the sun, his heart stopped fluttering like a frightened sparrow, and began a long confident glide, like that of the gulls. He took the cuff-links out of his french cuffs, stripped off his jacket and rolled up his sleeves. Through the open window came the salty breeze, stirring his beard and mussing his hair, and with the breeze came freedom. Harry was free as a bird—to express his elation he threw the neat brown attaché case out the window and over the bridge railing and watched it fall into the wide blue water. His soul, he felt, was soaring and dipping and gliding through the cables of the bridge and beneath the girders. He'd taken stock of his resources and found them considerable, a free soul, and a beautiful wife. He'd said to himself:

"Harry, you've got nothing to fear. You never should have taken the job anyway. You're not a bookkeeper, Harry. You're a musician. Sit down this afternoon and write the sonata. The 'Golden Gate Sonata.' Have lunch with your beautiful wife and then write music."

At that moment the cables of the bridge began to shake and quiver, and Harry gathered together all of his spiritual forces. Suddenly he heard it, the music of a harp, high, intense, and felt as though his soul were crystal about to shatter at the sound.

Harry crept stealthily up the staircase to his apartment, and eased open the door. Kathi was standing at the kitchen table in black slacks and a white blouse, hurriedly putting canned food into a cardboard box.

She said, "Hurry up, honey."

"What a sweet voice she has," thought Harry, "like a child's."

"How did you know I was here?" asked Harry.

Kathi spun around on the ball of her foot, and her hair followed like a long whip. She stared at Harry for a moment as though he were an intruder, made a grimace with her lips as she sometimes did when combing her thick tangled hair, and then said calmly:

"Don't be hurt, Harry. Just let us go."

"Kathi," said Harry.

"You don't own me, Harry. I'm not your wife, you know," Kathi said, grimacing even more. "It's not as though we were really married."

With that Jimmy Whitely walked in from the bedroom carrying two suitcases. He looked at Harry, sagging in the doorway, and walked to Kathi's side, as though to protect her; he put his skinny arm about her soft pink shoulders like a shield and glared fiercely at Harry.

"That's right," he said, "you can't keep Kathi cooped up here like some kind of bird."

As Harry moved from the doorway Jimmy stepped bristling in front of Kathi, his knobby fists outstretched and his ears turning red. Harry, however, merely sank to the sofa and held his face in his hands.

"Why didn't you tell Kathi you were a bookkeeper?" Jimmy asked.

Harry didn't answer.

"You told me you wrote music, Harry," Kathi said.

"You were never one of Them," Jimmy said, "and you're not one of us either."

Harry remained seated and unresponsive.

"I'm sorry," Kathi said.

"Come on," Jimmy said.

As the door closed, softly, with a considerable click, Harry Fellows stood up and walked to the kitchen. He drank a glass of water slowly and then sat down facing the steel door of the refrigerator. The polished enamel of the machine gleamed and the motor hummed with grim precision. In the sparkling handle Harry could see his face, partially distorted but recognizable. He opened the door with the tip of his little finger and gazed at the light above the butter compartment, then he closed the door. He did this three times in succession before leaving the apartment.

Harry sat quietly while the Number 5 lumbered through the stifling city of San Francisco. There was a look of complete absorption on his face, as though he were listening to music only he could hear.

# THE SEA AND LOVE

/ Jim Gregory

HE stood by the open window and watched the silent figure come up the beach toward his cabin. The moonlight sprinkled a silver dust on the sand and small waves. Her long hair billowed in the cool night breeze. The stray strands caught some of the moonlight silver and gave her a shimmering halo. She seemed to float without a sound along the edge of the tide; her nude body silhouetted against the summer sea.

Once a week for the past year she had without fail made the trek along the beach to his cabin. In fact, it was just a year ago tonight he had seen her walking along the beach for the first time. Since then she had always come the same night of the week.

He would wait at the door until she approached. Then he would let her in. The lights were out. She had stipulated that from the beginning. Also there was to be no noise. She would come in silence and they would have the drink. She would then walk over to the bed and wait until he came to sit beside her. He had noticed that when they kissed her lips were cold and passionless. They would fall back on the bed in the love embrace. He would lie there beside her rubbing her body trying to warm it from the cool sea air. The sea spray always seemed to give her a chill. He would rub her legs and thighs, warming them and drying the salty dew that had settled in her maidenhair. He would caress her breasts with kisses to bring the warmth back into the cold brown nipples.

She would lie there until he had touched her whole body and then turn to him and try to envelope him completely. She would no longer be a woman but an animal unsated. When she was finally satisfied she would push him off, rise and walk out leaving him exhausted but with a strange cold feeling that would not let him sleep. It was a ritual that never varied.

He watched her as she walked along the beach until she was even with his cabin. This time, instead of turning toward his cabin she turned to the sea.

A cold wave of fear hit him as he watched her walk out through the waves. This repetition of that first night a year ago caused him to run out of the cabin in a dream to try and catch her. The last time he had been standing at the door



watching the sea when she had walked up and waded out. He had felt intuitive uneasiness that accompanies danger. Like the year before he followed her out, swimming about thirty yards behind her. When she had reached the deep water and started struggling he swam as hard as he could. By the time he had grabbed her she was unconscious and when he had pulled her onto the beach she was dead. He had buried her behind his cabin.

## PUISSANCE

SHE sways cool blue  
And flame red her hair  
Ignites me.  
She breathes a moist rhythm  
And something in me stiffens  
Bitten by the nape;  
And if she tosses her head  
I bend like a slender pine;  
And the nearer  
Her white teeth and opal skin  
I feel lost with the scent,  
And all is flux and liquid will,  
And never has her eye sought mine  
Nor by accident  
Am I struck and still.  
And she has always been  
Aphrodite the death of men  
And the Virgin of prostrate knights  
At Chartres and Lourdes. . . .

—*Michael Zajic*

## UNINSCRIBED

FROM the loins of my race  
I tumbled into consciousness.  
I know with my eyes and ears and fingers  
The face of my world;

And from my place in Time and Space  
I shall tumble out again,  
Return to my element,  
Inert, painless, without refrain;

Like this mouldering earth  
Covered with sun speckled leaves  
Curling into brown scrolls  
Uninscribed with deeds of life.

—*Michael Zajac*

## WHEN SIX

WHEN she was six,  
Mary tenderly tested her loose front tooth with apples.  
The tooth hung, like a yo-yo, for days.  
Daring its strength, Mary found it fun to  
Wiggle the tooth front and back  
With the practiced tip of her eager tongue,  
And take deep sucks—pulling the tooth down—  
So that it felt like a rubberband.

'Twas while watching tv's Mickey Mouse  
Scold feathered Donald Duck,  
Mary gave the fatal suck and evicted  
The dental patch from its gummy home. .  
That eve, with ceremony,  
The tooth was placed in a final spot of rest—  
An angel cup (kept for holy water)  
While below lay Mary dreaming of a silver disc  
In the cup by morning, her insomniac tongue  
Searching an empty space in the first  
Post-tooth of night.

—C. J. Sharlip



BLACK cassocked, eye glasses of platitude  
nevertheless, they told we I would find her here  
on the pale beach.

I laughed yet remained somewhat discontent.

Each time I scuffed down to the beach  
sand was always wet and would not  
brush aside under the cynic sweep  
of my hand.

I got up early this morning.  
The sun was high and the  
sand was singularly dry.  
Deep I dug and felt that  
first brush against her.

That first glimpse at the  
Virgin's shell—now I know  
men are right.  
She's under the sand of  
soft mounds yielding to  
quick discoveries.

I think with blisters  
and sun-baked skin,  
I'll hold her host before  
the fall.

—C. J. Sharlip

## PLEI ME

FLOATING . . .  
dragonflies descend  
pouring acid  
death  
among children  
fondling silver knives  
between  
    the broken vines,  
disgorging meat  
red-wet  
beneath a bomber's moon,  
now  
    flinging  
fragile arrows  
stroking, as  
a gunship  
    sqreals,  
becomes a million,  
    glistening,  
vicious bees. . .

—*Richard Stanley*

# DECEPTION OF THE THRUSH

/ Robert Massey

THE well-regimented dust hung heavy in a shaft of light intruding at one end of the near-empty barracks. I sat on the edge of my bunk, waiting. It was Saturday, and another week had passed heavily, leaving the empty weekend, the butt-end of nothingness. I looked down the row of yet unmade cots at the quiet rebels, those who bitched their way through the week and slept all day on the weekends, recovering from their usual sullen drunkenness. Some of them were entirely bound in their blankets, giving them the appearance of giant larvae enveloped in brown cocoons. I got up slowly, sensing a slight stabbing pain in my chest. Too much sleep. My wall locker loomed metallically behind the bed, its recent coat of paint still unable to hide its scars of long use. Opening the flimsy locker door, I withdrew my civilian clothes, regarding them with somewhat less contempt than the row of impeccable khaki sleeves next to them. After taking a slightly smashed cigarette pack from the shirt pocket, I threw the clothes on the cot; a dark-green plaid shirt and white denim pants. I thought that it must be habit. Sitting back down on the squeaky cot, I pulled a cigarette from the pack and lit it, throwing the match on the floor where it lay idle for a moment before emitting a final wisp of smoke. I dropped the fresh cigarette and started to pick it up, deciding instead to butt it out. Someone stirred down the row, coughed and sat up, the springs of his bed squeaking rebelliously. I looked at him briefly, glancing by him as he rubbed his pallid face blotched redly on one side from sleep.

"Gotta weed?" he asked, hoarsely. I pulled the last cigarette from my pack and threw it toward him. It landed a couple of feet short, and he got up, stumbling grouchy to retrieve it. He muttered a sarcastic "Thanks," and I chose to remain quiet. He shuffled over to my bunk, rubbing his stomach with one hand and scratching his head with the other.

"Gotta light?" he asked. I handed him the book of matches I had been holding, and he tossed them back after lighting his cigarette. Muttering something else, he stumbled back to his cot. I started to dress.

The town was dull as usual. Only a few soldiers could be seen walking around. Some were in uniform, others in civvies. I had reached the point where

I could spot a soldier in any attire; the black socks and shoes, the cheap PX clothes. There was little escape for them, though some tried. Fear had been driven into them like a hard nail, and they rebelled by drinking, gambling, reading, anything to forget. Any success they achieved was rarely without cost. It was like a big city, like New York or Pittsburgh where anonymity was the universal goal. The lookers-on would lean out of their windows, watching the world drone on below them, and the children would shout games and drown in the clamor of fire hydrants. The Puerto Ricans and exiled Cubans would shout and sing, at least sharing their facelessness. It was like that, too, in the army: Cohen, US 72343027, Private First Class.

I sat on a park bench, smoking and gazing blankly at the few people who walked by. Their looks were mostly the same. "What the hell do you want?"... "Why did 'you' have to come here?" I tried to imagine it as it had been before 'us'. Probably the same dull, lethargic town not too different from mine. Only the dry, dusty heat of east Texas distinguished it from this. Two churches, a drug store, a bar and restaurant, a store, old frame houses. Sunday was always the best day as it was everywhere. Especially Sundays with Carla in Atlanta, just before the letter telling me to report for a physical. Carla's wild, red hair and blue eyes that sparkled like dew-laden gentians on a misty morning. Her rippling laughter flashed for a hollow moment. I thought of her voice, raspy, almost tainted, yet proud. Before I met her, she had travelled all over the east coast with a small band, singing night after night to the throngs of "pikers," as she had called them. Then we left for Spain on the money she had saved: her to get away from routine, me to avoid it. We hit every cantina from Gibraltar to Barcelona, drunk all the way. In Granada we came across a broke Englishman and bought his motorcycle, paying him enough for it to get him home. Carla insisted on learning how to drive it, but I always managed to put her off until one Sunday in Madrid. We were both drunk and I let her try it. She had just started off when she suddenly lost control of the machine, and it lurched forward toward a crowd of tourists in the plaza. Little old ladies darted for cover, leaving behind trails of travelers checks and Cook's folios. Some swatted at her with folded umbrellas, but most of them just screamed. She drove straight into a concrete pillar and, thrown from the crash, landed on a street vendor who shouted violently that she would have to pay for the damage done to his cart. I had been laughing so hard that I had forgotten that she might have been hurt. She hadn't been, but the twisted machine was a total loss. We left it there with the vendor and bought an enormous bottle of wine, running through the streets, threatening the passers-by with the huge bottle which we flayed wildly, stopping only to drink until the wine, the night and we were merged into a whirling maelstrom, spent with the dawn.

A month later we were back in the states, and I took my physical for the army. That had been nearly two years before, and I hadn't seen her since. I looked at my watch. It was five o'clock, and the sun had begun to disappear. I caught a glimpse of the horizon through the web of branches. It had been nearly three

weeks since I had seen a sunset. A tangerine-pastel vapor hung neatly between immense granite ribbons. Behind me the sky was nearly dark. I got up and walked to the bus stop.

The ride back to camp was the same as always: The blurry-eyed passengers being jostled with each bump in the road, some trying to sleep, others merely gazing at the pitch outside, none anxious to arrive. I felt a sort of omnipotence, a knowing that we were all trapped for a moment in time and space: all partners in the desperation of our transitoriness: even the mess-hall-fattened sergeants clinging to the army for twenty years, only eventually to have return to their farms or factories and collect the barely nominal pensions from the army. One such sergeant had impressed upon me the reality of the army, the cold inanity of life. He had gotten me out of bed at three o'clock one morning and had made me do pushups—the sound of my dog-tags hitting the floor as I lowered myself dinned like a funeral knell, the musty dust in my parched throat rasped like chicken bones. Unable to sleep, I had lain awake the rest of the night, aware.

A fly buzzed lazily, flitting aimlessly among the passengers. The bus moved on, and the fly, as though in defiance, buzzed suspended in the air, like a thought. Grinding through time, relentless pursuers of the virgin future in an endless hymeneal rite.

Nearly everyone had fallen asleep when the bus churned to a stop in front of the restaurant in the ramshackle boomtown near the base. I got off and went in the shabby liquor store adjacent to the restaurant. Two soldiers in grimy fatigue clothes argued with a little man behind the counter and with themselves. The owner took his chance to get out of the fight by waiting on me.

I asked him for a bottle of cheap Scorch, and he pulled a green-glass bottle off one of the shelves and dusted it off before putting it into a bag. I paid him and walked out of the store, back toward the camp. Tucking the bottle well into the front of my trousers, I walked unnoticed past the guard at the gate.

I went up the stairs and walked slowly to my bunk, sitting down. There were still a few stragglers who hadn't yet left for town. I looked at my watch. Another bus would leave in an hour, and I hoped they wouldn't stay around that night. Getting up slowly I shuffled to my wall locker, noticing that I had left it unlocked. I thought to see whether anything had been taken, but hurriedly stowed the flask in the locker, making sure it was locked in the event I fell asleep. I walked down the steps, pausing at the latrine, and on the way back up, passed the platoon sergeant. He murmured something I gathered to be some sort of greeting, and I mumbled back in the same tone. Sitting down on my bunk, I lit a cigarette, anticipating even more the departure of the men at the end of the room. I decided to rest a while and butted out the cigarette, lying back on the bunk. The voices droned on into oblivion, and I fell asleep. Carla and I seemed to be riding on our motorcycle past thousands of soldiers standing in formation. She was laughing and flailing a huge bottle which contained a hand and a length of intestine. The bottle suddenly caught fire, and she flung it at a column of uniformed men all

wearing green plaid shirts and bluejeans. The bottle struck the first man, who fell backwards with the blow and knocked down the man behind him. The succeeding figures fell like dominoes, tumbling backward over each other until we were out of sight. Carla was driving now, and though I was afraid, she seemed to have control of the machine. We rode into a deserted city that was reminiscent of some post-war European cities. We stopped and lay down on a brown blanket at the side of the road. We were about to embrace, just as we were interrupted by loud footsteps marching in unison. I looked up, and standing above us were three men smiling lecherously. Carla left on the motorcycle, and the man on the left, who seemed to be in command extended his hand to me. I smiled and said, "Good afternoon; my name is David Cohen." He grasped my hand and jerked me to my feet. One of the others grabbed me from behind and locked his forearm around my throat, digging his fist into my back. None of them spoke, but they simply stared at me menacingly. I tried to cry for Carla, but was unable until I had awakened, still calling, the cry a mere whisper. "Carla." I repeated the word several times, and got up from the bunk slowly.

Opening the wall locker, I pulled out the bottle of Scotch, listening acutely for anyone in the barracks; no one seemed to be there. I took a large swill that burned somewhere in my chest and screwed the top back on, lying down on my cot. It had grown totally dark outside, and the black window-panes reflected the pale green and white walls grotesquely. Taking another drink of the liquid, I could feel a vague dullness at the pit of my stomach. It seemed that anxiety could no longer exist, though perhaps it was better that way. I started to fall asleep when I heard the loud smacking sound the screen door downstairs made against its frame. I turned over on my stomach as someone clopped hollowly up the stairs, the footsteps sounding like those of someone moving slowly to avoid tripping. The shoes scuffed across the floor and stopped in front of my bed.

"Why ain't you downtown with everyone else gettin' potted, Cohen?" I recognized the voice as that of the platoon sergeant I had passed earlier on the stairs. He droned on, "Hell you might oversleep your discharge," and pausing in confusion, said "I wouldn' be sleepin', not me." Opening an eye squintingly, I watched the weaving figure move to the bunk next to mine. He sat down heavily, bouncing on the springs. I started to answer his question just as the voice started again. "Yeah, hell, kid. Get out o' this goddam army." He drew a hairy hand across his face. "...s no good for kid like you. Know what I mean?" I tried to force a laugh and swung clumsily around until I was sure the floor had received my feet.

"Yeah, I guess," I replied. The ruddy-faced man peered blankly around the room.

"Bet you never seen yer leader drunk before," the man drawled. "But lemme tell you sump'n." He rubbed the hairy hand across the stubble on one side of his face. "Kid like you, got brains," he said, burping between phrases. "Get out," he said, "Army's no goddam good." I couldn't think of anything to say, and feeling the tenseness draw up in my stomach, I forced a terse cough. He relieved the



silence, babbling on half to himself, about the army, and I realized that I hadn't been the only one to suffer under the weight of regimentation. His expressionless eyes met mine for a moment, the veins netted violently against the white, and I wondered if he were capable of anything other than this. But what could I have said to change anything? I felt a certain empathy toward him, though I wasn't sure whether it was pity or fear, or perhaps even hate. I asked him why he stayed in the army, trying to be interested. He paused for a moment, trying to light a crumpled cigarette.

Exhaling a gust of smoke he turned down the corners of his eyes and bared his teeth slightly. It was probably an affectation he had picked up somewhere during his career. I had noticed that gesture that leaders would use in talking to a group of subordinates. It could be the dead of night, but they would still turn down their eyes at the corners and bare their teeth as though attempting to ward off harsh sunlight. He made a smacking sound as he opened his mouth to speak and stayed in the ridiculous pose for a moment before deciding to say nothing. He took a deep drag on the unevenly burning cigarette, and I tried to pry him further. I asked him why he had stayed in the army. He clasped his overly-large hands in front of him and spoke, looking at my feet.

"Oh, when I got ready to get out I was gonna set the world on fire," he said, smiling vaguely for a moment. "I gave it a half-ass try, but ended up inna goddam merchan' marine, jus' bummin' aroun'." He put the cigarette in his mouth and spoke through it, inhaling and emitting large puffs of blue smoke as he spoke. "Then got married, had a kid, 'n the army looked a little better." He coughed and took the cigarette out of his mouth, dripping it to the floor. He looked straight at me and burped, "Know what I mean?" I nodded my head, wondering if he had detected my speciousness. He laughed obscenely, and I knew he hadn't even been aware of me. I asked him more seriously:

"Couldn't you make it on the outside, or didn't you have the guts?"

"Whazzat?" he said, cocking his head to one side. I wondered after all if he was drunk. "Guts?" he asked, "You talkin' to me 'bout guts?" He tapped his chest several times hard with the point of his thumb.

"Lemme tell you, kid," he said, peering at me. "You ain' seen nothin'. You're as green as I seen 'em, an' I been aroun'. I seen a lot!" He huffed slightly with each phrase as though unsure of what to say next.

"Jeezus," he said, pausing on the name, "Jezus, you ever seen a man die, kid?" He lowered his tone and continued. "You ever had your buddy die in your arms, jus' like that?" he said, snapping his fingers to emphasize the idea. I felt like lying and telling him I had. Maybe if I used my father he'd shut up, but I probably would have laughed. I told him "that that wasn't what I had meant," which confused him even more.

"Sure it was," he said, again resigning any coherency. Not quite sure of what to say next, I took a cigarette from my pack and lit it. I looked at the figure across from me, who had also produced a cigarette. I offered him a match, which he

refused, continuing to search his pockets. As I dropped the match to the floor, he flicked upon a shiny lighter and lit the crumpled stick hanging from his mouth. I was getting mad and wanted to pry him further. I asked him why he didn't stay out, and he looked at me and spat out a reply in a cloud of smoke:

"None o' your goddam business," and I asked him whether he knew. He shot a venomous glance at me and curled up his lip on one side as he spoke.

"Yer goddam right I know!"

"Why?" I asked.

"You gotta lotta guts," he said . . . *time past and* . . . "Hell, I mus' be better'n' thirty years older'n you an' you got the guts to tell me . . ." . . . *time future* . . . I tried to tell him that that's not what I had meant. . . . *what might have been* . . .

"You think your shit don't stink?" he shouted. "Lemme tell you a thing or two, you punk," and he stood up uneasily, spitting out the words.

"Take it easy," I said, "I was kidding." . . . *all point to one end*. . . . I was sweating when I saw the bottle on the cot. Hoping he hadn't seen it, I attempted to pull the blanket over it. It had been too late . . . *which is present*. . . .

"Whazzat?" he cried, "A goddam bottle?" He seized the flask, and I grabbed it from him.

"Givit back," I said, "What do you want with it? It's mine." . . . *down the passage*. . . . He stood a little more erect and put his hands on his hips, throwing his head back in a diabolical laugh.

"Goddam, kid," he said and stopped laughing . . . *which we did not take* . . . "You ain't gonna get out so clean after all." He stiffened the hard expression and batted his eyes drunkenly, his head weaving in an almost imperceptible circle. "Gimme the bottle," he said, "or I'll hav' to take it from ya."

"Screw you," I said quickly. He stood mute with his hands on his hips, his head still bobbing slightly. He looked almost hurt . . . *towards the door*. . . .

"Kike!" he screamed "Goddam Punk!" he yelled again, stretching out the phrase emphatically. I looked down at the floor, not knowing what to say. I was embarrassed and felt again the phlegmatic dust rising in my nostrils. "Goddam Kike," he yelled. I looked slowly into the tedious face, and he flung his head back and laughed maniacally at the ceiling . . . *my words echo* . . . I began to shake. There were razor burns around his throat that would have stung from the sweat streaming down his face . . . *shall we follow?* . . . The figure blurred, still laughing, and my fist tightened around the neck of the bottle, my eyes locked shut . . . *shall we follow?* . . . and I flung the bottle in the direction of the obscene voice . . . *the deception* . . . and as though conditioned I went limp with the shattering of the bottle . . . *of the thrush* . . . I felt as though I should be sick. I tried to cry.

Lying down on my cot, I took a cigarette from the pack and lit it, crumpling the pack and dropping it on the floor. The figure walked away, down the stairs . . . *through the first gate* . . . Tomorrow would be Sunday, the butt-end of the void of nothingness. I wondered where I might go . . . *into our first world* . . . perhaps.



## OENONE

### I

WHO shall tend my brown dirt path,  
all over-grown, now he is gone?

Who shall go like a tide to the moon  
that perches on your journey's end?

Dear brown path, now he is gone,  
I go no more to the early moon.

Never more shall I take my scythe  
and sweep the nettles from your breast.

Never more shall I go to the moon,  
the golden moon at journey's end.

### II

Soon the wood will lose its leaves,  
and supplicate the sun for Spring.  
Then Ida will conceal her face  
behind a veil of shining lace.

The flowers mock me in their blush of joy  
at being bedded down like lovers to the ground.  
If feeling were a rush of wind,  
the rustling of shredded blossoms,  
opened, drying purple veins of poems,  
would ebb and flow like plague  
about the tent of Mother Ida.  
All the long-winged birds whose homes

are woven reeds on Gargarus are stony-eyed.  
They watch great Ilion sunk within  
its waxy yellow mist of miles;  
they watch me walk beside the stream.

When Paris sank me to the bank.  
reflection was as soft as grass.  
Now birds above the sombre brook  
spread lowering expanse of wings.

Their black beaks point to Ilion.  
Mother, you have turned me from myself.  
The moon has had its season in the sky,  
and nettles grow in darkness where I lie.

—*Deirdre Butterfield*

TEN strong boys bouncing up about me in the grass  
like the golden roundheads of dandelion.  
Thick heads of curls, little Christophers to scrub  
and towel-roughen 'til they're red and warm,  
and short happy toes that curl like smiles  
and giggles that leave brothers flopping arms and  
legs over one and other among a morning pile of pillows.  
This, the handsome garden of my delight.

—C. J. *Sharlip*

# SOFTLY, THE APPLE TREE

/ B. S. B. Hassen

THE snow coming down through the January night was after the merry season, was after the time when the wreathes had come loose from the doors and the Christmas trees had been burned behind the houses. It was after the time when the holly had become stiff and fallen away from the doors and the mistletoe had shriveled into dark clots over the doorways. It was after that time and it was long before the cheery hats of Easter would dance over carefully-tended hair in intricate designs and skirts would rest on the wind, flowing with it, and the sun would open up many varieties of perfume.

He was sitting naked in his father's apple tree yelling into the wind. The snow was rushing all around him through the darkness, drifting into patterns on the hair of his crouched legs and arms and shoulders. It was freezing in his hair and bits of this fuzzy crown kept slipping over his forehead onto his stomach—a last place of warmth—and the pale figure shivered violently among the branches. His numb flanks didn't feel the roughness of the lean bark they rested against any longer but his toes still clung to the limb beneath him and his arms followed the V of the two branches above his head.

The snow sifted through the night; pervading each other they created a thick child: heavy silence deep within his ears. He could see only one square of warmth that a window in Softly's house next door spun out into the unforgiving veil and his mind could only grope to remember past Thanksgivings and Christmases: of the fusty food and the family gathered, of the warmth and the camaraderie.

"I won't come down. Twenty-five years old and I crawled up here where I ought to be—where I've always been—and I won't come down," he yelled, beating his arms against his body. There was a wheeze that chanted and whistled through his chest and throat, that was growing louder even than the silence and the wind in his ears. He could tell he was getting sicker and steadily sicker since his body could no longer feel it.

"I won't go down. I'll make myself sick and I'll die and by God I'll deserve it and I'll be better off for it."

He almost laughed. What he really wanted was to be among the steaming

pies and cranberry sauce with relatives of uncles and aunts and cousins around talking to him and wanting to talk to him and consulting him about things. Just things.

"I'll get sicker even and they'll come over with pies and sit around chatting with each other and something in the oven and a fire of logs that they'll carry me into the living room to see. And I'll die but nobody'll notice. We'll all be so happy and they'll keep on like that from then on: talking and looking into the fire, not even noticing I'm decaying there beside them. We'll be so contented, waiting for the football game to start."

He flapped his arms with sharp slaps against his body, a scrawny vulture hanging by one last claw to the tree.

"I'll stay up here till spring and rot among the blossoms and I'll add my own smell of putrefication to the tree and the sun, and the bees'll make a nest under my chin and the birds'll spit in my hair. I'll fertilize the ground for the apples. I'll help make those fall apples thick and good. Unless I rot the tree out which I probably would. But I won't go down. I won't go down. I won't go down."

A light in his father's house went on, sending a barred patch of glare onto the snow where it lay stranded and warped beneath him. This would be his grandmother, he knew, to check up on him, to find out what he was doing every damn minute.

"Sonny," she called out the back door. "Sonny, are you out there?"

He hung distended from the limb for a moment before dropping onto the ground and padding off into the depths of the back yard where he crouched behind the woodpile.

"Sonny."

Her head stretched around the screen door and she peered into the darkness. Flakes swirled about her blue-white hair.

"Come in here, Sonny."

Finally she stopped calling him and turned off the light. She was hiding in the dark house, waiting for him to come in so she could catch him and make him eat something and brush his teeth. He waited until he heard her motor roar out as she drove around the corner. Then he crept across the yard, through his bedroom window and into his bed.

When he woke up he couldn't breathe. There was a dull light, a pale, flat illumination that left no shadow anywhere within the room—the shadows had been absorbed by the light's penetration through the clouds and still-falling snow of midday. He had been dreaming of his relatives, distorted, scattering under the claws of a grandmother harpie who swooped close to the earth, all fangs and venom, to send them into chaotic scramblings across a valley of blue snow, who dropped down in front of the television set to remind him that he was rotted and ugly, her wings hunched up behind her scrofulous neck, her beak clacking, "Decaying. Decaying. Sucking in your own miasma!"

Now, awake in the noon, he couldn't sit up because there was a roast turkey

humped in a flat black pan on his chest. His nostrils and throat were clotted with its smell. The relatives stood around his sliding cradle of illness, smiling above the wildly-colored packages they had brought for him. They were whispering but the sound came to him only as the rustle of dry leaves rubbing together under a rake. Someone was wheezing loudly in his ear. They all leaned over the bed while the wrappings changed their leaping clots of color from package to package like fire through water. And his bed was a boat rolling gently in the swell.

The light was suddenly eclipsed by his grandmother crouching her tiny form against the window, shading her eyes with one rheumatic claw to look into the room. The relatives wailed, sliding out from under him into the closet where they stood with their presents among the trousers and shirts and ties, pulling the door behind them. The smell of turkey turned into his own odor of sweat and fever stuffed in his nostrils and the boat tipped steeply while the scrawny old woman peered in over her wrinkled eyes.

"I'm done," he thought.

She stood there, an emaciated stump, a twig under the wet flakes, unseeing, unfeeling, unhearing while he whispered his desperation at her.

"You're destroying me. When I was a child, you told me under the dining room table not to pick my nose or my finger would stick in it forever. You told me fingernails were poison if I chewed them. You told that child if I cried the children would all know it in Sunday School the next day and laugh at me. They laughed because I didn't pick my nose or chew my nails or scratch myself.

"You instructed the teenager that the desire of woman is the worst of sins so I was torn with guilty adolescent lust when the young bitches were just beginning to learn their power and discover the joy of the cruelty of their bodies. I must love my grandmother always or God will hate me. You're killing me.

"You say you're lonely. No one comes to see you because you're an old woman so I must come and eat with you every night and listen to you talk and thrust your guilt on me. And listen to your blabber every goddamn minute! You're killing me!"

She turned from the window as if she had heard enough of his talk: that she knew what was best and would listen to no more! She turned toward the back of the house, lifting her skinny, booted feet out of the snow, hurrying against its depth. His knees pumped against his chest under a convulsion of violent shakes.

He had to get to the door of his room before she did and lock it against her. Her age raced his illness to the door between them: illness rolling out of bed and crawling over the rug to the three short steps at the room's end, reaching its arm up and shutting the lock just as trembling age was turning the knob from the other side. He sat hunched on the bottom step with a spasm of coughing and hacked a blot of red sputum onto the rug between his feet.

"The Thinker," he thought. "That's me," and laughed up another clot of sputum to hang over the edge of his lip, too tired even to wipe it away.

"I hear you coughing. I hear you. You're sick. It's the way you've been living. Open this door. If you'd listen to me you wouldn't get sick. But you won't listen.



I'm old. No one listens. No one comes to see me because I'm old. No, you won't listen and now you're sick. You see? Now maybe you'll listen to me. Open this door!"

The Thinker with a blob of bloody sputum hanging from his mouth. The Thinker. Cold unreachable sculpture.

"Go away, Grandmother. Leave me alone."

"Open this door. Maybe you'll listen to me after this."

"Leave me alone."

"You'd better open this door or you'll really get sick."

"Go away, Grandmother."

"If you don't let me in to make soup and give you pills and tell you what to do, you'll never get well."

The Thinker with city-bred pidgeon-slime in his hair. His body scarred by the weather. Unmoved by any of it. Cold as the cold. Clear as the snow on his shoulder.

"Go away, Grandmother. Leave me alone."

He crawled into his bed, nausea foaming at his lips, and didn't listen to her scratching at the door.

"Lie to us. They lie to us. And when we're old they tell us the lies were our own fabrication and expect us to believe—to keep on believing—the childhood of horror they created of us. They kill our sense of God with ugly cold Santa Clauses sent from Tiffanys and Kresges and burn down love with bitterness and hate. And yet we believe in the apple flowers of spring and summer castle hillsides and the colors of fall as we are expected. They lie. The only beauty is outside their cackling crackling voices."

The relatives bending, the presents heaped before his eyes, his arms rigid and hard, pushing against the wall. Convulsed but safe in his pain—safe in the relatives soft faces of pain.

The door splintering from its lock snapped him up out of his fevered peace and the doctor, a darker bird in his black suit, was closing the shades against a bright sun off early-morning snow while the grandmother hovered behind. Her fragile body flitted at the doctor's shoulder, seeming barely to touch the rug.

The boy rolled up out of his sleep feeling drained. He ached and was sweaty but the relatives were gone. The doctor was bending into a large satchel with the grandmother leaning beside him. Her hand was a tiny white blotch on the doctor's black sleeve.

"I'm all right now," he said, but they wouldn't look at him. The doctor rooted his huge fists through the black bag.

"Grandmother, I'm not sick anymore."

"The doctor is going to give you a shot and leave some pills for me to give you. I'm supposed to take care of you till your father gets home. I'll make you soup.

"I couldn't get the doctor yesterday afternoon but he came right over this morning when I called him. We had to break the door—I mean, the doctor had to break the door—to get in."

She patted the dark sleeve and chuckled a kindly, broken, grandmotherly laugh. "And I'm supposed to take care of you till your father gets here!" she said. "You're too late," he said. "I'm all well."

He climbed out of bed to face the doctor who was holding a large hypodermic needle in front of their faces. The doctor seemed grotesquely involved with his procedure while detaching himself from the room.

"The doctor and I know whether you're sick or not—not you. You get back in bed and stay there while I take care of you. I'll make soup and read to you and give you your pills."

"Will you tell me how to live so I won't get sick anymore?"

"Yes! Yes!"

"I'd rather die first!"

"I have to give you soup and your pills."

"Goddamn the soup and the pills!"

The hypodermic weaved in front of his eyes sharpening the fabric of the doctor's black suit into a warped and magnificent cloth behind its glass. The boy was swaying from weakness and pain. His mind drifted on a serene pool of dark water above his body. The doctor, evil bird, made a sign to the grandmother.

"Get into bed now and roll over onto your stomach," she said. "Sunny side up," and cackled her broken laugh.

"No, by God. You're too late!"

He pushed between them to the window and climbed out into the snow which accepted him to his knees. He was blinded by it but protected too. The inside of his bedroom was a dark den, an evil cave out of which his grandmother's voice crackled.

"Get back in here," she screamed. "You're naked. You can't stand there naked. Come in here. You'll be punished for this. God will punish you if you don't come in here where I can feed you soup and take care of you and tell you what to do."

He sat down in the snow. There was nothing else to do. He didn't want to ever move again. He just wanted to lie there, to curl up in the snow and go to sleep forever. Her harpie's claws came out through the sun grabbing at him. The thin pale sticks of her arms seemed to shrink in the light. He was tired. Oh God he was tired. The Thinker in the snow. Statue safe with its dried eyes in the snow. Curled up he could just sleep and just sleep and just sleep. Her nails yanked at his hair. The doctor stood quietly dark behind her. But the white on the snow, the particle of it gleaming, covered him in a web of dew and he could just sleep if he could curl down into it. Sleep. Sleep if he could curl.

He drew himself to his knees, wagging his head away from her hands and pointed himself toward the house next door. He straightened his knees but couldn't lift his head up nor bring his arms out of the snow so that his rump was tilted at a fierce angle toward the window. He looked around past his grandmother and spoke to the doctor.

"Vulture," he yelled. "Your medicine is too late. I don't need it now. You're

macabre!"

The doctor smiled condescendingly. His medicine would always be waiting. But she screamed his sins hysterically out into the snow at him—the snow which welcomed them and drew them into its ineffable mass and turned only its fiery brightness back toward the boy. His naked sins were taken into the snow and hidden and the scrawny, vomiting grandmother wretched her words for nothing.

"Oh God damn your soup and the pills," he yelled once more for no reason he could think of and began to plow through the snow in his angular, fevered condition toward the house that two nights ago had sent out a delicate welcoming light into the darkness. He could see his friend's mother at the window. She looked so kind and worried. Now he wouldn't have to push himself any farther. The snow opened with a splash before him as he fell with his face into its receiving coolness.

Then he was being dragged by soft hands and he didn't have to help. He could just lie and be dragged. And he was looking at the black hole in his bedroom wall where the grandmother leaped raging, shouting invectives that edged serenely by his ears and the doctor stood quietly, always quietly, a darker shape in the blackness. But he was safely being carried away. The cold that numbed in to his center was a bit of peace, a gentle rocking that softly tethered him in to the metronomic hypodermic movement. And as he sank, there was softness and darkness jagged with color.

The metronome hung to one side with a clack, then slowly began its metallic heaving again. He was aware of warmth rolling down the creases of an infinite afternoon hand. Slowly the drone was a winter fly not dead, not legs-up in somebody's medicine cabinet. Slowly the fly was a hum, a drum, a buzz near his forehead. Slowly his vision was furry around afternoon sunlight that drifted in orange across the window sill. Coming up around his head there was a pleasant mackerel smell of sea and salt water. There was a tray beside the bed with a bowl of dried mush substance on it. His mouth tasted of milk. He had urinated in the bedclothes.

Softly, the daughter of the house—his roaring boyhood companions called her Softly when she had stopped brawling with them to walk quietly toward the beginnings of womanhood—interrupted this gentle state of waking when she hurried into the room.

"It's warm here," he said.

"You're in the attic bedroom. All the heat from the house rises up here."

"It's nice," he said, still under sleep's influence.

"This'll be the third time we'll have to change the sheets. You look better."

"Oh I feel fine. I feel good. I don't want to come out of this sleep. I feel like a child pretending to be sick to stay home from school."

She bathed his face and pushed the hair up out of his eyes.

"Say," he said. "You haven't been feeding me soup!"

"Lie down. No, not soup. Just oatmeal and milk. Never mind, don't lie down. Sit over in the chair and I'll get you another one of grandfather's old nightshirts and some clean sheets."

She helped him over to the welcoming fatness of the chair and then went away. The room was small with beaverboard walls that slanted into the ceiling. It held the brass-postered bed and a desk and the chair he sat in and a small dressing table with a picture sitting on it of Softly's father wearing the naval uniform he was last alive in. The sunlight was coming straight into the room now but it was pale and weak from the shade and the late afternoon. He wanted to open the shade but he didn't have strength to get up.

Softly came back into the room smiling at him over a pile of sheets. She tossed him a clean nightshirt and began to make the bed.

"Can't you get me some pajamas?"

"That's all we have here. Unless you want me to call your grandmother and ask her to stop by your house and bring us some."

"Christ no."

"She's been here several times, howling that she's the one who's supposed to take care of you. But mother told her you were too ill to be moved or even have visitors. Boy, did she yell.

"You've been raging about statues and vultures and harpies and hypodermic needles and relatives and you've been cursing soup and pills ever since we brought you in. Mother says your grandmother's driving you crazy. She says your grandmother's a selfish old woman. Why won't she leave you alone?"

"Help me back to bed."

"I like to help you. It makes me feel good to watch you get better and know I'm helping you."

"Fine. Now leave me alone to sleep."

"Okay," she said and helped him over to the bed and patted him on the arm. "Sleep then. I've been waiting for you to come. Do you remember when I used to peep out of the lilac bush at you. You taught me my first dirty word and how to smoke a rope wrapped in newspaper. When you're ready to leave . . ."

"I'm never going down. I'm going to stay up here where it's warm and let your mother take care of me. Let me sleep, please."

"Mother's cooking fish for our supper. You can sleep for a couple of hours, then I'm going to wake you up and feed you your oatmeal and you can stay awake for a while and talk to me. You've been sleeping too much anyway."

"Fine, fine."

She stood in the doorway, bending forward to smile across the sunlight.

"Are you comfortable? Do you want me to arrange your pillows or anything?"

"No. Just go away for Christ's sake."

By the fourth day she was talking and talking and he couldn't make any sense of her.

"Running with the heat until I'm soft in the summer grass," she said. "Until I melt and run into the ground. Do you smell the bees running? I can smell powder on the buttercups even, in those summers."

"Yea?" he said.



On the fifth day she spoke out of that teasing, that cozy possessive early love: "Are you mine? Do you need me? Could you get along without me?"

"Never," he said, his lip on the edge of laughter. "You could destroy me!"

"Oh, oh, oh," she crowed. "You are all mine!"

"And how you do destroy me," he laughed.

On the sixth day he kicked and stirred beneath the covers, discovering really for the first time his surroundings and the feeling of the flow of blood in his veins. He eased himself into the chair and read books that Softly brought to him—books about pleasant parents and happy children, about cartoons spread across Sunday afternoon living room floors, about winter fires and a family popping popcorn, books about two people growing wise and tolerant into middle age together and beyond—with her leg along the arm of his chair and her hand slipping lightly down his shoulder and the smell of her just-washed hair, wisps of it drifting across his forehead.

In the evening he moved his chair over to the window and opened it so the cold wind off the snow could come in and stir him with its life and clear smell. Softly sat in the darkness with him, clacking her knitting needles through the silence while he hung off his chair at the window and looked out over the country with its mascaraed face making the stores down the hill appear tiny and effete—the cardboard set for an old movie—where an occasional intense driver could be seen bucking his car in toward the city. An old woman, wrapped heavily against the cold, hobbled beneath a streetlight at the corner below him. A child passed her dragging his sled behind and neither had time for the other. Young pine trees looked honest under their shelves of snow.

"It's safe up here," he said. "And it's cold and clean down there. I can see the moon caught between the reaching, wrinkled fingers of our apple tree. It's very wide and pale and it makes everything stand out against the snow.

"If I close my eyes I can see it all without looking—just by smelling the cold coming in over the window sill. I can feel it and see and hear it. I can smell the pine trees and the old woman sweating under all those ancient wrappings. I can hear the child banging his sled and feel them ignoring each other. I can feel the ghost-paleness of that moon and the worry and anger of the man slamming his clutch and screaming his wheels against the ice. I can see the people in their houses: the parents yelling at each other downstairs while the children lie warm under the covers but restless and dissatisfied—restless for the unique and awful pains of the adolescence to come. While teen-agers roll over the snow, his hand under her coat, fingers of ice against her dry breast. Others, older, jabbing in cars that are hot with wet, steamy windows and a smell of fear and flapping hurry.

"It's warm up here and the county outside that window seems to be the coldest, clearest beauty. I'm going to stay here where it's safe."

A young boy crossed the street below, his obese face turning from side to side almost furtively.

"I remember those thirteen year old clutchings in dark party basements. Cold

damp walls with one tiny red bulb to tint the darkness. What is left for so old a young boy? Cheeks plumping and pumping with fat, wet, hot thirteen year old tongues. Those clutching cellar years."

The boy disappeared between two houses. In the bedroom, the needles' even, metallic clicking continued while he leaned his face against the pane. Then after a while it stopped. He heard her chair settle itself and the material of her dress brush against her legs. When she kissed him lightly on the eyelids, one after the other, he felt her warmth against his face.

"I'm going to stay up here. I'm not going down," he said.

She squeezed his hand for a moment, then drifted away and he heard her on the stairs. He hunched harder against the cold glass with his eyes still tightly closed.

The afternoon of the eighth day he was doing push-ups on the floor when she carried in his oatmeal, syrup and milk. There was toast on the tray for the first time.

"Get me some cigarettes and coffee, will you? And a glass of beer this evening."

"You're not strong enough yet," she said. "When you're strong enough, come downstairs and get it yourself."

"Don't be a bitch, will you."

She shrugged, set the tray on the floor and ate her chicken sandwich while he did sit-ups. She liked the feeling of being cross-legged near him, eating her sandwich, able to reach out any time she liked and touch his elbow or hand.

He turned the bowl of oatmeal upside-down on the rug.

"I'm not eating any more of this garbage."

"You have to come down sometime," she said and began to clean up his mess.

"I don't. Your mother'll take care of me. You send her up from now on. She'll give me something I can eat and not this garbage."

"It isn't good for you to stay up here so long. You're well now. You ought to face your grandmother and the rest of it. You ought to go down there and start all over."

"It's warm up here. The smells of the house and the cooking rise up here. The other side of that window is beautiful from here. I don't have to see the wrinkles on old men's faces or the scrapes on children's knees. I'm safe and warm. Now go away and send your mother up from now on."

Alone, he watched that night grow warm and the snow begin to melt and drip off the roof. He could almost smell the snow curdling along the gutters. Heavy clouds made the night dark and thick. The room was too hot. He roamed around the room and knocked things over and cursed.

The next morning Softly's mother came in with eggs, bacon, biscuits, ham and coffee—and cigarettes. He lifted his head off the pillow and stared unhappily at her smile as she bent over the bed to smooth a wrinkle in the cover.

"Where's Softly?"

She plumped the pillows up behind him, put the tray beside him, stirred cream into his coffee and brushed the hair out of his eyes.



"Where's Softly?"

"She said you didn't want her to come any more."

"Send her up. I want to see her."

"She went into Baltimore to do some shopping. She said she was going to stop over at her grandmother's for a couple of days."

"What?" he yelled, jumping up and rumbling around the room, cursing and knocking things over again. He kicked the chair a few times and then started to dress.

He resented the drizzle that had started and the miserable grays of the damp morning. He resented the snow that was turning into blackened slush in the gutters—he resented it all that he had to leave his comfortable room and the breakfast that would get cold and hard behind him.

"I'm going into the city," he called.

He stepped outside into the rain where the snow was making muddy puddles in the dead grass under a breeze that was sticky with dampness. And he turned toward the city grumbling.

## GOAT POEM

THE moon has become too big  
too close

Covering tingaling bells  
Moving down trodden paths.  
Night goats wander  
In threes.

There bells ringing  
Across bleached fields  
Of laughing giggling  
tingaling love

Bells sounding.

Calling out

Time

To grab grass

bend bushes

Alongside trodden paths

Of over virile goats

All counted by threes.

Three black ruts—

Twisted bent and crossed.

On a white path

Leading the goats

Toward a tin—

Love sucking moon

Altogether too close.

—*Hal Hiestand*



# ANNOUNCEMENT

*The Calvert Review*, in cooperation with the Student Supply Store in the Student Union announces a

## *Writing Contest*

Fifty dollar prizes will be awarded for the best fiction and the best poetry of the year. Each prize will be half cash and half merchandise. The deadline for submitting manuscripts for the Spring issue is April 15. Manuscript guides are available in the Calvert Review office, Room R-1-E, in the basement of Woods Hall, or in the English Department office. The contest is open to undergraduate students; staff members are not eligible.













